

POLICY IMPACT ANALYSIS

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

ANNEX 5: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS



GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SERBIA



SOCIAL INCLUSION
AND POVERTY
REDUCTION UNIT



POLICY IMPACT ANALYSIS: Providing Additional Support to Students from Vulnerable Groups in Pre-University Education

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ABBREVIATIONS

AVID	Advancement via Individual Determination
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (Ireland)
EU	European Union
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KELA	Social Insurance Institution of Finland
LFES	Law on Fundamentals of Education in Serbia
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
REF	Roma Education Fund
SENO	Special Educational Needs Organizers
ToR	Terms of Reference
ZEP	Zone d'Education Prioritaire
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1. INTRODUCTION

This work is part of the policy impact analysis initiative of Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and UNICEF Serbia which aims to develop a functional model of pro-poor education policies in Serbia. In accordance with Terms of Reference (ToR), the Consultant has undertaken a desk review and produced an overview of examples and impact of effective support measures/policies for vulnerable groups in education (the poor, Roma) in EU and beyond.

1.1. MODE OF WORK

The information for this desk review was drawn mainly from meta-analyses produced for example by OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF or Roma initiatives. The work started by mapping out policies targeted to promotion of enrollment, attendance and prevention of dropout and improving learning outcomes of children coming from low socio-economic background (See Annex 1). In accordance with the ToR, Finland, Ireland and Hungary were selected as subject for case studies because they can demonstrate achievements in equity. However, in the course of the review successful policies were identified in a broader range of countries and the scope of the review was expanded to capture examples from a larger number of countries.

1.2. DEFINITIONS

Countries apply different definitions for disadvantaged children. Some European countries such as Belgium, Norway, Denmark, and Germany do not specifically define children 'at risk' though specific measures for such children are available. In Finland, there is no national definition but the Core Curriculum¹ acknowledge the need to support certain children, such as Sami, Roma and migrant children for whom the possible need for support is assessed on an individual basis. In Hungary, in turn, the concept of disadvantaged relates to the family education background and income.

OECD uses three categories of children with disadvantages. *Firstly*, the disadvantages may arise from disabilities or impairments; *secondly*, they may arise from social and emotional factors and problems in the

¹ Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education in Finland (2000) and the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (2003)

interaction between the student and the educational context, or from specific difficulties in learning and *thirdly*, disadvantages may arise from socio-economic, cultural and/ or linguistic factors. These factors may relate to family situation (long –term employment of parents, single parents, being an orphan or separated from parents); to the psychological and physical well-being of the child or parents (mental/ health problems, family violence, alcohol or drug abuse or exploitation); children growing up in a situation which is considered dangerous for their physical, mental, moral or social well-being; and children with a physical or mental disability or those with a chronic illness. The educational need is to compensate for the disadvantages attributable to these factors.

According to PISA results, students' background has an impact on their academic achievement (see e.g. PISA 2009). Disadvantaged students are at higher risk of low performance than their more advantaged peers. PISA studies show that students with low parental education, low socio-economic status, first or second generation immigrant background, as well as boys have higher risk of low performance.

1.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There is limited documentation on the impacts of pro-poor policy reforms. For instance, while important disparities in educational achievement are identified and policies targeted to the disadvantaged are developed and implemented, information about the impacts of those policies is not systematically collected. Further, impacts of policies targeted for instance to Roma students are difficult to measure because in some countries it is not allowed to collect ethnic data. Another limitation is that actions targeted to specific vulnerability groups are often stand-alone initiatives or projects and robust project evaluations are not carried out to assess their impacts. It is also difficult to obtain impact information about policies at various phase of the child's education cycle. For instance, the age spectrum covered by PISA is only one point in late childhood, children at age 15.

Finally, impact in general is a difficult concept. OECD defines it as “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended” and European Commissions uses impact as a general term used to describe the effects of an intervention on society.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The Chapter 2 and 3 present the systemic level policies and measures and their impacts. Chapter 4 presents some measures targeted to disadvantaged schools and their impacts while Chapter 5 focuses on measures targeted to disadvantaged students. In each chapter examples of promising practices are presented in Boxes. The policies and measures are also summarized in the Annex 2.

2. ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Direct costs of education are a significant barrier to school access and attainment in many countries. Direct costs include for instance fees (for tuition, textbooks, compulsory uniforms, parent-teacher associations or community contributions, and school-based activities such as exams). Indirect costs include for instance clothing and basic hygiene items.

Introduction of free primary school in developing countries has significantly increased the enrollment in primary school. Similarly, it is also assumed that making the final year of preschool education compulsory and free would be an effective way to bring the entire age cohort into contact with the school system before entering first grade. Though there is some evidence that participation in pre-primary school and early childhood education has a positive impact on school enrollment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, information about its effects on attendance and learning outcomes is limited.

Awareness raising and sensitization of parents should accompany the policies used to improve enrollment to education. Some projects for instance in Romania and Hungary (see e.g. REF 2012) have proved that engaging and educating Roma parents on the importance of education has increased the enrolment of Roma children in the compulsory school and that as a result of these projects, parents are reported to participate more in school work. Parents also need to know what support systems are available in the schools as many of them may not be able to support their child for instance in homework. It is also noted that this advocacy is particularly important when pre-school education is concerned.

Proximity of schools to communities is an obvious condition for participation in education, especially for children from poor families and for children with disabilities. From inclusive education perspective each child has the right to attend school nearest their home. In order to this to realize, public policy needs to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by location or *physical accessibility* of classrooms or by cost barriers to education.

The equity issue of urban and rural schools is looked at this point. What is known is that students in urban schools perform better than students in rural and remote schools, even after accounting for differences in socioeconomic background. The performance gap between students in urban schools and those in rural schools can be more than 45 score points after accounting for differences in socio-economic background. This is more than one year of education across OECD countries. That gap is 80 score points or more – or two years of schooling – in Hungary. However, this pattern is not observed in Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Specific policies addressing rural urban gaps include provision of school transportation, home-based support, mobile school units (e.g. Turkey) exist but they are not evaluated. Also measures to attract and retain qualified teachers in rural schools have been introduced in some countries.

2.1 FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND VOUCHERS

Providing financial incentives for enrolment by offsetting household costs is a good strategy to increase access for the marginalized. Examples of such targeted incentives include direct monetary transfers as well as cash stipends and scholarships or bursaries. For instance, Netherlands illustrates the effectiveness of vouchers. The level of choice offered, alongside fixed funding from government per student (with additional funding for disadvantaged students) appears to provide incentives for Dutch schools to keep improving. On average, these students tend to be from families which belong to a lower social class when compared to those from which pupils attend public school, and yet test scores achieved are higher. Financial incentives can also take the form of vouchers to be exchanged for specific education. (UNESCO 2010).

Impacts of Voucher programmes

The Programme for the Expansion of Secondary Education Coverage (PACES) was launched in 1991 in Colombia, to provide the poorest third of its population access to secondary education. In this programme students selected by a lottery were provided with vouchers to attend private schools. Municipal governments provided 20 percent of the funding and the federal government provided the remainder. The programme, which ran until 1997, covered 125,000 children in 216 municipalities. Findings from the analysis showed that that voucher beneficiaries have higher educational attainment, when compared with non-voucher students. Also voucher students were 6 percent less likely to repeat a grade; they scored higher on achievement tests and they were 20 percent more likely to take the college entrance exam. They were also less likely to be married and earned more in wages.

Angrist 2002; Patrinos 2011

2.2 EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

European and U.S. experience show that *early identification and intervention*, especially those targeted at disadvantaged children, can produce large positive socio-economic returns. However, it is critical that identification of children at risk and preventive measures start early and child health care is the first instance to identify vulnerable children. Equally it is important that early identification and intervention policies are in place at all phases of education cycle.

Early Identification and Intervention in Finland

In Finland all municipalities are obliged to provide this health care to all children from maternity to the end of compulsory school cycle. Currently it covers practically all children and it has appeared to be a successful measure to identify children at risk. If multi-professional intervention is needed, the health authorities are obliged to cooperate with social protection, education, child protection and produce an interdisciplinary a Child's Welfare Plan.

The issue of using standardized school evidence tests as means of assessing the child's maturity to school is widely discussed in the education community and there is an increasing consensus that standardized "school readiness testing" alone should not be used to streaming vulnerable children (especially Roma children) to special schools. There is evidence that use of such tests has been used as an eliminatory instrument to delay entry to school or as a basis for streaming children in special schools, for instance in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia (White et. al 2012). As a matter of fact, use of such instruments may deny early school experiences or additional support for children who would benefit the most.

Instead, focus should be put on the support needs and *readiness of the school* to accommodate children with different kinds of needs and backgrounds and efficiently use *preparatory classes* and other measures for pupils who need additional support. This is of particular importance when children from different language groups are concerned.

2.3. LANGUAGE

Preparatory classes for immigrant pupils exist in nearly all European countries. Pupils, who speak a language other than the official language as their mother tongue or at home, are provided additional support to learn official language spoken in the particular country. There are also policies which support instruction in own native language for instance for children with immigrant background. There is evidence that gradually decreasing percentage of mother tongue instruction is an effective way to introduce an official language. (Abazi, 2006). Also, alternative strategies such as involving the parents and volunteers from socio-linguistic communities exist because the presence of many different first languages in one classroom and the impossibility to find and to hire staff to serve in all languages is difficult. Language development may be facilitated through the provision of home-based programmes before school age, in addition to centre-based care and education in the majority language.

Pre-primary education for immigrants in the City of Helsinki

In Helsinki, preparatory instruction is provided for approximately 4 000 children and young people of immigrant origin, who do not know enough official language used in schools. One year preparatory instruction is provided in 40 languages, including Russian, Somali, Estonian, Arabic and Vietnamese. In addition, all pupils, who speak a language other than Finnish as their mother tongue or at home, may study their own native language or some other language used by their family during the entire period of schooling. The lessons are complementary to basic education. Two hours of instruction are provided each week. One group includes pupils from different schools as lessons are not necessarily given at a pupil's own school but at some other school after regular lessons.

It is noted that providing education in the minority language alone is not a sufficient measure, but also maintaining the languages and research are important. For instance, developing instruction and research of Romani language at university level constitutes a prerequisite for implementation of education in Romani language. Therefore the education ministry, together with relevant stakeholders should make sufficient resources available to language maintenance and also ensure that sufficient material is available in different languages to support linguistic development of the child.

Language Nest

Language nest activity has been used with positive results in some localities to revive minority languages such as Romani language and Same. In most cases the child comes to the day care or pre-school using mainly the official language but all activities are conducted with the minority language. The purpose of the nest is to maintain the minority language, strengthen the cultural identity and learning to learn skills of the child.

3. STRUCTURING OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

The OECD has studied the impacts of certain systemic measures across its member and partner countries and has compiled the findings in a report titled “No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education” (2012). This report presents recommendations on how to design a school system that is fair and inclusive. Those recommendations are related to structuring of education system by *limiting early tracking and streaming and postponing academic selection; managing school choice to promote equity; providing attractive alternatives in upper secondary education; preventing dropout and offering second chances to gain from education.*

3.1. TRACKING AND STREAMING OF STUDENTS

Research findings suggest that early streaming has a negative impact on individual level. Negative effects are found particularly on the achievement levels of disadvantaged children as it is observed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be placed in the least academically oriented tracks or groups. Some studies confirm that early tracking policies (for instance at the age of 10 to 12) increase the spread of educational outcomes and clearly harm children with lower abilities, since they cannot benefit from the positive effect of being around more able peers. (OECD 2010). Tracking can also lead to large variations in performance among schools due to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the communities that are served.

Student selection can take different forms. In some countries selection consists of tracking students into different study programmes or in different schools with different curricula usually based on academic performance. This generally leads to either academic or vocational programmes, and to different further educational opportunities and professional prospects. Some countries, in turn, have a comprehensive system of schooling, where all children in a particular geographic area attend the same school, but pupils might still be streamed into different academic tracks *within* schools. In some countries, all classrooms in all schools are grouped heterogeneously, with pupils of mixed ability levels. In those schools ability grouping, which is not permanent, can be used as a pedagogical approach for instance in in-class reading or for project work. There are also important differences between countries in timing and form of this selection. For instance, in most Central European countries, pupils are streamed before the age of 15.

The OECD suggest that equity enhancing policies should delay early tracking and that postponing tracking until upper secondary level, combined with the possibility to transfer between school types, can reduce segregation and promote equity without diminishing efficiency. Removing early tracking may also indirectly affect the dropout. Evidence supporting this statement is found from **Sweden** and **Poland**. In Sweden evidence shows that the removal of early tracking had an impact on the overall educational attainment. In

Poland tracking was postponed in 2002 from age 14 to 15. The PISA scores suggest that this reform seems to be associated with improvements of the outcomes of the lower performers, without hindering the performance of the top achievers (OECD, 2007).

3.2. SCHOOL SELECTION

Many countries have introduced school choice mechanisms where parents can decide which school they want their children to attend. This policy is often criticized for its negative consequences: There are fears and experiences that the well-off parents send their children to the “best” schools and on the other hand, poor or less educated parents may not have sufficient knowledge or money to make the choice even if they wanted to. There is also experience, that freedom of choice has produced negative and unintended impacts. For instance in Hungary, parents of non-Romani children have taken the advantage of the lack of limitations to enrolment and enrolled their children to schools in which the proportion of Romani children is low, or even transferred their children from the schools where the proportion of Roma children is high or growing.

In systems that are already very segregated, introducing mobility through well-designed *voucher system* can serve equity goals. The objective of a voucher programme is to extend the financial support from the government to other education providers and thus give all parents, regardless of income, the opportunity to choose the school that best suits their preferences. There are rigorous studies showing that voucher programmes lead to significant improvements in both access to secondary schooling for relatively poorer students as well as increases in test scores. Additionally, studies show that voucher recipients are more likely to complete secondary school, enter university, postpone marriage, and increase their earnings (see for instance World Bank Blog “Education for Global Development”²).

3.3. GRADE REPETITION

The evidence on the impacts of repeating a year is mixed, but it seems that this practice is ineffective in getting the failing students to perform better. At least, it is costly for the education system. Further, research in various countries suggests that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds repeat a grade more often than their advantaged peers. Thus grade repetition widens inequities. Although the objective of grade repetition is to provide these students with more opportunities to learn, there is little evidence that underperforming students benefit from repeating a grade. One hypothesis to explain this negative relationship is that having the option to have low-performing students repeat a grade places fewer demands on teachers and schools to help struggling and disadvantaged students improve their performance (OECD 2012).

² [HTTP://BLOGS.WORLDBANK.ORG/EDUCATION/HOW-DO-SCHOOL-VOUCHERS-HELP-IMPROVE-EDUCATIONSYSTEMS](http://blogs.worldbank.org/education/how-do-school-vouchers-help-improve-education-systems).
"school vouchers can help improve education systems"

Individualized support versus grade repeating

The Ministry of Education in France defined specific targets to hold schools accountable for grade repetition rates. To support achievement of these goals, the 2008 reform provided two hours of weekly individualized support and catch up opportunities during the last two years of primary school. Results of this reform are promising: While in 1960s, 52% of students had repeated a year before starting secondary education, and in 1980s this proportion remained as high as 37 %, in 2009 the students held back accounted only for 14%. The Government has set an ambitious target to halve this figure by 2013.

O'Brien P 2007; in Equity and Quality in Education supporting disadvantaged students and schools. OECD 2012.

Individualized support and catch up opportunities can produce better results than repeating. Also reducing grade repetition implies developing effective alternative strategies as well as policies aiming at culture change in schools and classrooms. When learning gaps are observed, automatic promotion but with early support and comprehensive assessment, is more effective than extensively using grade repetition as a remedial strategy. Evidence shows that students at risk of failing the school year would benefit particularly from additional instruction and remedial support designed to accelerate the pace of learning. This support should be offered on a regular and frequent basis, supplementing rather than repeating the workload, using different methods and ensuring continuity in student teacher relationship. (OECD 2012, 51). Preventive strategies include, among others, improving teacher's skills to teach in classrooms with diverse attainment levels, extending learning time by introducing remedial classes and strengthening meta-cognitive skills. For instance in Portugal, a programme aiming at improving socio-emotional skills targeted at potential grade repeaters has resulted in a significant reduction in grade retention (Martins 2010, cited in OECD 2012).

Repetition is embedded in the culture on many school systems, so additional strategies may be needed to tackle its roots. For instance, reducing and eliminating repetition requires *raising the awareness of educational authorities of consequences of grade repetition* and supporting them in searching for alternatives to support students with learning difficulties; using for instance *financial incentives to reduce repetition* and by making schools accountable for the number of students held back. Equally important is to establish early identification systems which will provide information not only about those under the grade level but also the low achievers, so that support reaches all falling behind in time.

3.4. PROVIDING ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVES IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Providing good quality and practice-oriented alternatives in upper secondary education is one of the measures which could influence in inequality in education. Austria and Germany for example have diversified offers and obtain graduation rates close to 90%, with VET students making up the majority of the upper secondary graduates.

Alternative Vocational Education and Training

In Norway low motivated VET students are offered an alternative shorter and less comprehensive upper secondary programme leading to a lower level degree recognized by industry, rather than the full four year VET upper secondary. The programme has yielded positive results: Students, teachers and trainers are mostly favorable to the measure and dropout rates seem to be very low. Furthermore, 65% of the students gained the motivation to continue their education and training in order to obtain the full upper secondary certificate. Considering that VET students in Norway have dropout rates close to 45%, the implementation of such a policy measure could lead to some substantial improvement. However, the measure has also been observed with some caution as the creation of a lower level degree may lead to endangering equity within the country.

Markussen et al., 2009; Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2008.

3.5. PREVENTING DROPOUT AND OFFERING SECOND CHANCES TO GAIN FROM EDUCATION

Most dropouts happen in the transition from lower secondary education to upper secondary level. In many countries specific programmes have been developed to the youngsters at this phase of their education. Such programmes include for instance *guidance and counseling, mentoring and catch up programmes*. The national Dropout Prevention Center in the US has rated more than 100 such programmes having strong evidence of their efficiency in reducing dropout.³

As causes of dropout are interrelated, achieving higher rates of completion involves complex solutions to a complex problem. Systems to track students at risk (through for example the compilation of information on attendance, performance and active involvement in school activities) have been developed and transferable databases between school levels and early warning systems are essential.

Tracking system for Dropout

The National High School Center in US has developed a system to tracks student on the criteria of attendance, GPA, engagement and discipline three times year. Once a student at risk is identified, he is reported to school's Dropout Prevention Team that combines individual programmes to catch up, counseling and guidance.

(<http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategie>)

³ <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>

The analysis by Lynche (2012) of the drop-out prevention measures concluded that in order to overcome early school leaving, policies must involve action both outside and inside school simultaneously. The most successful measures combine components within school, outside school at a systemic macro level. The second largest group of successful measures was the ones that were implemented completely outside the education system. These were also all successful but many of them only in an indirect way, i.e. they had an impact on removing some of the causes of early school leaving. A number of policies are also completely outside of the education system, such as a number of therapeutic behavioral interventions for the child and the family. Although these programmes may not lead directly to a reduction of the dropout rate, they do increase good behavior, lower instances of problem behavior and better attitudes towards school (Hammond et al., 2007).

Picking up on a certain number of signals that form an early warning system may require a close cooperation between educational authorities and many other parts of government such as social and labor services, health services and justice system in some countries. However, though cross-sectoral cooperation and interdisciplinary support systems are much promoted in EU policies, there are several. For instance, student counseling may face problems due to confidentiality regulations which prevent exchanging information between authorities.

4. IMPROVING DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

PISA results show that students from lower socio-economic background are at risk of low performance and that disadvantaged schools may reinforce this negative effect. The reasons for this phenomenon are multiple but the primary ones are: students' socio-economic background has a strong impact on their performance; many disadvantaged schools are unable to counteract its negative impacts, and may indeed accentuate it. (OECD 2010).

Defining low performing disadvantaged schools is very complex. An analysis of the country approaches (OECD 2012) gives an idea of the elements that countries take into account to categorize either disadvantaged or low performing schools. They are:

- Student outcomes (grades, improvement)
- Physical and human capital (finances, facilities, staff, leadership)
- Student intake characteristics (socio-economic, migrant, language)
- School context (e.g. violence)
- Geographic areas and regions
- Historical or traditional issues such as supporting a specific ethnic group considered as disadvantaged)

Programmes targeted to disadvantaged schools show that they can make a difference provided the level of additional financing is sufficient and they are accompanied by incentives to attract and retain qualified teachers. Ireland has a specific measure targeted to disadvantaged schools.

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, Ireland

In Ireland, the DEIS (Delivering Equality of opportunity in Schools, launched in 2005), focuses on addressing the needs of schools with a concentrated level of disadvantage. It has developed a standardized system for identifying levels of disadvantage in schools and provides a range of support to 670 primary schools and 195 post-primary schools, including: reduced pupil teacher ratios (for urban primary schools in communities with the highest concentrations of disadvantage); allocation of administrative principals; additional allocation based on level of disadvantage; additional financial allocation for school books; access to numeracy/literacy support and programmes at primary level; access to Home School Community Liaison services; access to School Completion Programme; enhanced guidance and counseling provision at post-primary level; enhanced planning support; access to the Junior Certificate Schools Programme and the Leaving Cert Applied; and provision for school library and librarian support for the post primary schools with highest concentrations of disadvantage. The last report on Retention in post primary schools shows that the average Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased from 68.2% to 73.2% for students who entered post primary level from 2001 to 2004.

4.1. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Many school systems offer additional payments for teachers, which may take the form of financial remuneration and/or reduction in the number of teaching hours. Additional payments are also awarded for particular responsibilities or working conditions, such as teaching in more disadvantaged schools, particularly those located in very poor neighborhoods or with a large proportion of students whose language is not the language of instruction. These schools often have difficulty attracting teachers and are often more likely to have less experienced teachers.

Evaluations show that targeting support to disadvantaged schools can contribute to the improved learning outcomes. However, providing financial incentives to teachers only is not a sufficient measure to *firstly*, increase the share of experienced and quality teachers in disadvantaged schools and *secondly*, to improve learning outcomes. It should be supported with other measures related to learning environments and resources.

Examples of Financial Measures targeted to Disadvantaged Schools

In Chile, intensive support was provided to the worst-performing elementary schools by training teachers, gearing courses to students lagging behind or with behavioral problems and providing textbooks. Evaluations show that grade 4 test scores improved significantly for students in the programme, mainly as a result of the introduction of more appropriate pedagogical practices in the classroom and facilitation of a cooperative environment within schools. A comparable programme in England (United Kingdom), "Excellence in Cities", produced more positive results, yet it too fell short of expectations.

The France, the ZEP (Zone d'Education Prioritaire, or priority education zone) channels additional resources, such as funds and additional teaching hours, to schools in disadvantaged areas. The distribution of the funds is left to the different schools' discretion. The evaluation of the first phase of the policy (1982-1992) found that the policy had no perceptible impact on completion rates or academic achievement. Furthermore, the bonuses awarded teachers were not a sufficient initiative to increase the share of experienced or highly qualified teachers. Benabou et al., 2009). Findings from the United States can to a certain extent corroborate these conclusions. The No Child Left Behind Act holds schools accountable for increasing academic achievement and this seems to have had no impact on the dropout rates.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch government offered the municipalities a 2000€ reward for each early school leaver less in the 2006-2007 school year compared to 2004-2005. The goal was to reduce the dropout rate by at least 10%. Although a decline of 3% was perceived, this rate coincided with the overall decline in rates of early school leavers in the Netherlands and the result could be assigned to changes in the characteristics within the student population.

4.2 DEVELOPING POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Policy makers should ensure that disadvantaged schools work on creating positive school and classroom climates, and on eliminating the distractions to teaching and learning. A positive climate can have a powerful and significant impact on student achievement and well-being in schools. There are different options to support positive environments, as presented below (OECD 2012, 123):

- Making student well-being a high priority and developing programmes that contributes to positive peer relationships at school, as they foster academic performance, well-being and mental health (an effect that extends to adulthood).
- Prioritizing strategies to enhance teacher-student relationships, as they lead to better learning and teacher environments and furthermore to teacher satisfaction and better student outcomes.

- Considering the role of discipline: There is evidence that students who are continually punished and forced to experience failure are at higher risk of disengagement, disruptive behavior and dropping out. Students whose teachers use positive management practices show less behavior problems than students experiencing more punitive teacher behavior.
- Designing anti-violence curricula for disadvantaged schools, which may have a positive effect on core competencies such as self-control and decision-making skills and on behavioral problems.
- Introducing multicultural curricula and training at all levels.

Finally, the creation of a positive learning environment needs to be backed up by precise diagnosis, reliable information systems and accurate data. School leaders and educators should be educated to use this data to understand what the obstacles are to a positive learning environment, and then to inform strategic and day-to-day decision making

Multicultural Curricula and Training

There is widespread consensus on the crucial need to provide teachers with training about Romani culture and history. Initiatives have involved programmes, which implement and incorporate Roma language and culture into mainstream education curricula. Some programmes involve local Roma groups and non-Roma teachers collaborating on culturally appropriate school programmes for Roma children. However, impacts on those interventions are not recorded. Interventions on equal opportunities for Romani Children through School Development Programmes have been widely presented in (<http://www.egale.ro/english/resource/rroma>).

4.3 IMPROVING LOW PERFORMING DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

Based on empirical evidence and country practices OECD gives five policy recommendations on measures which have shown to be effective in supporting the improvement of low performing disadvantaged schools (OECD 2012). They are presented below.

Five policy recommendations in supporting the improvement of low performing disadvantaged schools

1. School leadership

School leadership preparation programmes should provide both general expertise and specialized knowledge to handle the challenges of disadvantaged schools. Coaching, mentoring and networks can be developed to support leaders.

2. School climate and environment for learning

Policies need to focus on the development of positive teacher-student and peer relationships; identification of struggling students; provision of adequate student counseling, mentoring and support in transitions; and alternative organization of learning time.

3. High quality teachers

Policies need to ensure that: teachers receive the skills and knowledge they need for working in schools with disadvantaged students; good quality mentoring programmes are available for novice teachers as well as adequate financial and career incentives to attract and retain high quality teachers in disadvantaged schools.

4. Classroom learning strategies

Promoting the use of a balanced combination of student-centered instruction with aligned curricular and assessment practices and ensuring that schools follow a curriculum promoting a culture of high expectations and success.

5. Linking schools with parents and communities

Policies need to ensure that disadvantaged schools priorities their links with parents and communities. Building links with the

5. SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

Support directed to disadvantaged students or students from low socio-economic background includes measures within or outside school. They include school transport, student welfare services, after school support, tutoring and mentoring, counseling and measures supporting transition to secondary schools. Also financial support in form of stipends is commonly used to attract and retain students from poor socio-economic backgrounds in schools. Support is financed by the education authorities and/or social welfare. Some examples are presented below but it is again noted that not much evidence is available about the impacts of those measures.

5.1. SCHOOL TRANSPORT

In most countries, school transport is provided for all pupils who live beyond a pre-specified distance from school, or if special circumstances apply (for example disabled pupils or dangerous school routes). The regulations regarding school transportation differ by country and usually they are not tied to socio-economic background of the child or his/her family but rather to the distance to school. The distance limits vary from one country to another, and it also depends on the age of the pupils. In **Denmark**, for example, the distance limit increases stepwise from 2½ km in the three youngest classes up to 9 km for pupils in 10th class. In **Finland**, as another example, there is a general limit of 5 km or a total travel time (including waiting time) of more than 2½ hours. In **Ireland**, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kms from their nearest national school as determined by the Education Department.

It is common that the school transport is financed by the education authorities at the pre- and primary school level and during the lower secondary school but the regulations change as the student moves to upper secondary level or is of age 18 years.

- In Finland school transport is provided by the municipality to students at primary and lower secondary education level. Full-time students at upper level of secondary school or vocational education (usually above age 18 years) are eligible to receive school transport subsidy financed by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA⁴) if the distance to school exceeds 10 kilometers and costs exceed 54 euro per month (2012).

⁴ Supervised by the Finnish Parliament, Kela is an independent social security institution with its own administration and finances. KELA provides social welfare services related to childbirth, study, sickness, unemployment and retirement.

- In Ireland, from the 2012/13 school year, school transport eligibility for all pupils entering a post primary school is determined by reference to the distance they reside from their nearest Post-Primary Education Centre. To be considered eligible for school transport, the distance must be more than 4.8 kilometres. Eligible pupils holding valid medical cards are exempted from paying this charge. Applications for transport for pupils with special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability should be made through the National Council for Special Education.

5.2. STUDENT WELFARE

Some researchers consider that comprehensive student welfare is one of the contributing factors behind the Finnish performance in the PISA. In Finland student welfare is a central component of the education system. It comprises of part-time or full-time special education support, health and dental care, free school lunches (a tradition begun already in 1948) and the services of a school social worker, school psychologist, school nurse, speech therapist, and study counselor at all levels of education. Depending on resources and the size of the municipality or school, the latter services are available in school daily or by an itinerary professional serving more than one school in the municipality. Schools are also encouraged, even if not obliged, to provide before and after school care and activities for first and second grade students and for students in special education. This can be arranged directly by the school or in collaboration with other municipal or voluntary organizations. Cooperation within the school and in multi-professional teams is crucial for early identification and intervention of academic or social problems.

In the comprehensive school, the main actor in student welfare is a **student welfare group**. It is a regularly meeting multi-professional group headed by the principal and it consists of the school social worker, school psychologist, school nurse, study counselor, special education teacher and, when needed, teachers and outside experts (municipal social workers, youth counselors, etc.). The task of the group is to offer both preventive and remedial help at individual and group level.

5.2.1. School Meals

School feeding programmes provide both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism, and improving food security at the household level. There is evidence that school feeding programmes increase school attendance, cognition, and educational achievement, particularly when used to benefit specifically the poorest and most vulnerable children (Bundy 2012).

Effects of Subsidized School Meals

Vermeersch and Kremer examined the effects of subsidized school meals on school participation, educational achievement, and school finance in a developing country setting. They use data from a programme that was implemented in 25 randomly chosen preschools in a pool of 50. Children's school participation was 30 percent higher in the treatment group than in the comparison group. The meals programme led to higher curriculum test scores, but only in schools where the teacher was relatively experienced prior to the programme. The school meals displaced teaching time and led to larger class sizes. Despite improved incentives, teacher absenteeism remained at a high level of 30 percent. (Kremer M. & Vermeersch C. 2004. School Meals, Educational Achievement, and School Competition: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation. World Bank. Washington DC.5)

⁵ <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/docserver/download/3523.pdf?expires=1359565527&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E4D2768A3BC206083D59678CBD30846E>

The school meal policies differ by country. Whereas free school meal is provided in Finland to all students, in the **UK**⁶, for a child to qualify for a Free School Meal, their parent or carer must be receiving particular benefits as stated by Government. **In Ireland**, the School Food Programme is to assist children who are "unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them" and no consistent eligibility criteria exist. Eligibility is primarily a matter for the Local Administration.

The Review on School Meals conducted by the World Bank and World Food Programme⁷ (2009) highlights three main findings. *First*, school feeding programmes exhibit large variation in cost. *Second*, as countries get richer, school feeding costs become a much smaller proportion of the investment in education. For example, in Zambia the cost of school feeding is about 50 percent of annual per capita costs for primary education; in Ireland it is only 10 percent. *Third*, the main preconditions for the transition to sustainable national programmes are mainstreaming school feeding in national policies and plans, especially education sector plans; identifying national sources of financing; and expanding national implementation capacity.

The effectiveness of school feeding programmes is dependent upon several factors, including the selection of modality (in-school meals, take-home rations, or some combination of these); the effectiveness of targeting; and the associated costs. Take-home rations can be more finely targeted and can give high-value transfers, but have significant administrative costs. They appear to result in increases in attendance, and perhaps educational achievement, on a similar scale to in-school meal programmes. In-school meals tend to be less finely targeted and incur higher administrative costs, but have the potential not only to increase attendance but to act more directly on learning. In-school snacks and biscuits have lower administrative costs but also lower transfer and incentive value, though the scale of benefit relative to meals needs to be better quantified. There is a particular need for better data on the cost-effectiveness of the available approaches and modalities. (Bundy 2012).

5.2.2. Remedial Teaching

Remedial teaching is one of the most commonly used mechanisms to prevent school failure. There are different models for financing this. In some countries, the schools are given an allocation of hours which can be dedicated to remedial teaching and the schools decide how to best use it. In some countries (e.g. in Serbia) teacher workload contains four hours of remedial teaching (LFES, art 136). However, the use of this resource and its effects are not known. In order to efficiently use this allocation it is suggested that teachers and schools would need clear guidelines how to provide and organize remedial teaching and that teachers should have sufficient capacities to assess the needs of the student.

⁶ In England, children are eligible to receive free school meals (FSM) if their parents are in receipt of any of the following benefits: Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit and Child Tax Credit, provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190. The Department for Work and Pensions' **Welfare Reform Act** plans to bring in a universal credit (UC), to be phased in between 2013 and 2017, to replace many current in-work and out-of-work benefits with a single payment. This will result in the removal of current income thresholds. http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Publication---Urban-_-District-School-Meals-Meals-Schemes.aspx

⁷ A joint review by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank Group in 2009, *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector*. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:22705274-menuPK:282424-pagePK:64020865-piPK:149114-theSitePK:282386,00.html>

5.2.3. Special Education Support

In many European countries pupils receive additional support in learning and co-operation skills in form of special education provided by a teacher specialised in learning difficulties. The objective of special support is to help pupils complete the comprehensive school syllabus. Special support may be provided as part-time instruction in mainstream classes or in separated settings. Objectives and practical arrangements are planned in conjunction with pupils and their parents. While part-time special support can be organized within school arrangements, in most countries, full-time special education requires a specific decision and may be given in mainstream classes, in special classes and at special schools.

Part-time Special Education in the City of Helsinki

At the beginning of comprehensive school (Grades 1 and 2), the special needs teacher⁸ works alongside the class teacher to get to know the pupils, their skills and strong points and plan support measures as necessary. If special needs are identified, the student may be referred to part-time special education, which is temporary support targeted to students with special educational needs in order for them to achieve their objectives and obtain the comprehensive school leaving certificate. Special support is provided one or two hours per week over a certain period of time as agreed. Schools may provide pupils with individual curricula (individualized learning plan), which cover the study plan, objectives and contents of studies, teaching methods and assessment criteria. Special needs teachers work together with class teachers (and subject teachers) within a classroom or teach small groups or individual pupils independently.

If a pupil needs continuous support in their studies, the parents may apply for the right to special education on their child's behalf. Transfers to special education are subject to a specific decision and the day-care centre, school and health care services provide assistance in assessing special needs. Pupils in special education may study in regular classes, in smaller groups or in special classes or at special schools with additional support provided by special needs teacher or special needs assistants. Pupils are provided with individual education plan (IEP) and their progress is assessed on a continuous basis. Special education provided in a regular class will be negotiated separately with the upper stage school. Where necessary, the special education decision may be revoked. Teaching arrangements will always be agreed with the parents.

5.3. AFTER SCHOOL SUPPORT

After-school activities can be provided by education authorities (as it is the case in Finland where municipalities are obliged to organize after school care for first and second grade students) or other organizations such as NGOs. Usually after school support contains support in homework and leisure activities. This is important especially for Roma students and students coming from poor families as their parents may have insufficient capacity to help them in homework.

Significant amount of research carried out on the impact of after-school programmes particularly in US⁹. The results have been mixed. One review of 35 studies reported that the test scores of low-income, at-risk

⁸ A teacher of children with slight learning and integration problems (special needs teacher) is required to have completed one of the following: special needs teacher training (300 ECTS credits/160 study weeks) or class teacher qualifications and special needs teacher studies (60 ECTS credits/35 study weeks) or subject teacher qualifications and special needs teacher studies.

⁹ Estimates suggest that more than 7 million children in the United States are without adult supervision for some period of time after school. This unsupervised time puts youth at risk for such negative outcomes as academic and

youth improved significantly in both reading and mathematics after they participated in after-school programmes. With regards to social benefits, significant increases have been observed in youths' self-perceptions and bonding to school, their positive social behaviors. Also, significant reductions occurred in problem behaviors and drug use. Academic outcomes for other youth, however, have been inconsistent. As a result, authors (Durlak et. al 2007) have stressed the need for careful evaluations of the effectiveness of different programmes and the factors associated with positive outcomes, along with realistic expectations about the academic gains that can be achieved.

After-school (Tanoda) support programme in Hungary

The latest PISA results show the Hungarian schools are the less capable to compensate disadvantages. For instance, Roma and disadvantaged children have 50 times less chance to finish secondary education than that of non Roma. This educational challenge is addressed through Tanoda activities which include "designing and wide spreading of extracurricular methods to support the educational success of disadvantaged pupils". The Tanoda aim to reduce the effects of social disadvantages of the pupils, and to strengthen the cultural identity of the participants through out-of-school activities.

Since the EU accession of Hungary from 2004, ESF support is available for financing the programmes. Tanodas are intended to be independent initiatives from schools, therefore schools (and their maintainers, the local governments) could not apply to the call, but NGOs, churches and Roma self-governments. The REF institutional experience suggests that Tanodas play a key role in providing educational support and enhance community cohesion and development.

Research and evaluations point to three factors that are critical for success of after-school activities. They are (i) Supporting sustained participation in programmes; (ii) Focusing on quality programming and staffing; and (iii) Establishing strong partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, especially families, schools and communities. (Durlak et. al. 2007).

5.4. TUTORING AND MENTORING

There are several examples of successful tutoring initiatives which have evidently lead to lower dropout rates and significantly higher grades as well as a better attitude towards school. For instance, several evaluations of the interventions targeted to Roma, show that mentoring and tutoring can significantly contribute to school performance and attendance. However, stronger impact could be made by combining financial incentives (e.g. stipends) with mentoring and tutoring. While tutoring and mentoring is usually done by peers or external people, an interesting example can be found in the Hungarian project financed by REF, where student teachers were engaged as mentors to Roma children who were enrolled in mainstream schools. This approach was a positive experience for both the teacher student and the pupil. However, better and more sustainable results could have been achieved if the schools and class-teachers were more engaged in planning for the support measures.

behavioural problems, drug use and other types of risky behaviour. Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. <http://www.afterschoolpgh.org/assets/SAFE-ImpactofAfter-SchoolProgramsthatPromotePersonalSocialSkills.pdf>

Teacher- students as Mentors

Teacher Training Faculty students were engaged to support children in the classrooms and after school. Improvements in the performance of the children were observed and also the student-mentors reported that they learned a lot both academically and attitude-wise. In their future work, they will not push the students with support needs “in to the corner”, but they are able to address them first. The student mentors, however, reported that more orientation by school teachers and principals would have been needed so that the role and efforts of the mentor would have been clearer. (Impact evaluation of Roma Education Fund 2012).

5.5. COUNSELING

Putting more focus on vocational guidance and counselling could have an impact in the dropout and retention as well as employment. For instance, due to limited knowledge and experience about professions and working life and in the absence of good role models, immigrant and Roma youth tend to select areas where future employment prospects are limited. Therefore, vocational guidance and counseling would be beneficiary for them to make more informed decisions. Also curricula measures which would bring learning closer to working life are important.

Counselling

In Canada (Québec), guidance and counselling are available even in primary education. In Austria, career guidance is organised according to a three-level model: career education lessons are provided by careers teachers; individual advice is provided by student advisors; and both of these are supplemented by a school psychology service that can offer specialised assistance. Career education lessons are carried out by the careers teachers based on a curriculum and standards, with 32 hours per year in the 7th and 8th grades. (OECD 2012).

5.6. SUPPORTING TRANSITION

Smoothing the transition from primary education into secondary level can prevent students from falling behind and potentially dropping out (OECD, 2011). Transition from one level to the next is a critical threshold and failure in supporting this may have fatal consequences. This applies to all transition phases. For instance, experience has shown that in an inclusive education setting dropout occurs most likely during the first months and thus, intensive support should be provided to the student and teacher during this phase.

Several interventions have been implemented in the US and in Europe targeting transition into the first year of schooling but reliable information about their long-term impacts is rarely available. For instance Schools & Families Educating Children is a holistic measure in US which involves both the school and family and targets children living in high risk neighborhoods. It involves family-group meetings in order to develop parenting skills. In parallel, children receive tutoring sessions for basic reading skills and a specific curriculum intends to develop children’s emotional awareness skills, self-control, and problem-solving skills. A positive peer climate is also fostered as well as an improvement of teachers’ classroom management skills. A thorough screening process at several levels identifies high-risk behavior either in pre-primary or in early primary and leads to a selective secondary intervention. This latter part involves parent-training, child social-skills training and academic tutoring (Hammond et al., 2007).

5.7. ADDITIONAL AND REMEDIAL PROGRAMMES

Many countries have developed strategies to support students at risk of drop-out and failure. For instance, **Sweden** has designed an individual programme for students who do not meet the requirements to enter upper secondary school. Similarly, **France** has a programme that aims to reintegrate students who are failing school at the lower secondary level. This programme has proved effective as 77% of students participating (total cohort nearly 8 000 were able to re-enter mainstream education).

An additional “year” or *10th grade* is widely offered in Nordic countries in the end of comprehensive stage of education. The purpose of this year is to offer students the opportunity to remedial work on subjects they have difficulties or they fall behind. This year also includes vocational counseling and community work so that students can make better informed decisions about their future. This additional class is available to all students, but specific *vocational orientation preparatory classes* are also offered to students with special educational needs and immigrants. The emphasis of this additional year is on strengthening the language skills and vocational guidance. These educational programmes has shown significant impacts at individual level, but experience has shown that more sustainable results could be achieved if support could be extended to the first months of vocational training to ensure that proper integration and start-up takes place.

In **Ireland**, there are several programmes for people who are at risk of dropping out or who have already left school and would like to further their education and training. One of those is a *School Completion Programme*, which is a support strand within the National Educational Welfare Board under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Each project is managed by a local management committee and provides a tailored programme of in-school, after school and holiday time interventions to targeted children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving. Also, the *Back to Education Initiative* provides opportunities for second chance education to adult learners and early school leavers who want to upgrade their skills. The initiative builds on existing schemes such as *Youthreach* which is a joint programme between the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It is intended to help young people return to learning and prepare for employment and adult life. It also provides them with opportunities to get certified qualifications. The programme is aimed at unemployed early school leavers aged 15 to 20. Also university preparatory programmes are offered to students coming from poor families.

University preparatory programmes

Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) use acceleration instead of remediation as a tactic to improve students' performance. In addition to being enrolled in advanced classes the students receive an hour a day coaching lesson from student peers or teachers helping them with study skills and critical thinking Programmes such as AVID reduce dropout rates and increase in college enrolment. In California for instance, AVID schools witnessed a 34% decline in their dropout rates compared to a 14% drop in non-AVID schools. AVID also involves a set of extra-curricular activities and engages the family at a variety of levels. (www.avid.org).

5.8. TEACHER ASSISTANTS AND MEDIATORS

Several measures have been developed and piloted to promote equal participation of Roma or students with immigrant background at all levels of education. For instance Roma have been hired as *Teachers' Assistants* to help bridging linguistic and cultural 'communication gaps' between Roma parents, Roma students and non-Roma teachers in mainstream (primary level education) schools for instance in Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. *Roma mediators*, in turn, are trained to act as a point of contact and liaison between the school and Roma communities for instance in Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland and Spain.

To date there have been mixed results in the use of mediators. In Denmark, Roma mediators have a high turnover. Reasons given for this refer to the fact that the mediators can only work for a short period of time as they are studying and working at the same time. Also, there have been problems with Roma parents in relation to the use of family relatives as mediators. Also in Finland, few mediators are employed in a small amount of municipalities. Further, it is obvious that good quality training is needed for both Mediators and Teacher Assistants so that they can efficiently support the teacher and children in need. Also, to ensure their sustainability and to make this job attractive their status in the civil service structure should be defined

6. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial support to students may include scholarships, loans or target support such as support to transportation, or Book Allowance in Ireland. The provision of such support varies by country as well as the criteria for receiving such support.

6.1 SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are very effective in giving a life-changing chance to individuals, which later return contribution to the development of their community. However, the literature shows that criteria for selection, the selection process as well as close follow-up would strengthen the impacts of this measure. Some evaluations (see for instance REF 2012) suggest that financial support alone is not a sufficient measure to ensure completion of education, but combined with mentoring and tutorship it could contribute most to for instance, increased numbers of Roma in tertiary education. Also, evaluations suggest that measures should be developed to ensure that support reaches students in rural and very disadvantaged areas. More could be achieved if support could be targeted already at secondary and high school level.

The effects of scholarship policies as means for increasing equity should be reconsidered because it is likely that students from poor families have fewer opportunities to merit-based stipends. This can be justified by for instance PISA results which show that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more common low achievers than their advantaged peers and thus they hardly qualify for the merit-based stipends. Specific schemes targeted to poor and students from low social-economic background are therefore needed.

Some models of financial support are presented below:

- In a Project Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (Grad) in US students graduating on time receive a 1 000 USD university scholarship. The project involves a rather large scale reform process that ensures higher Math's and reading skills and prevention starts already at primary level with ongoing data tracking and evaluation. It combines classroom management, student performance enhancement and parent and social worker involvement (www.projectgrad.org).
- In the UK, a pilot measure, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been set up involving a conditional cash transfer to students 16 to 18 years of age for staying in full time education. The evaluations of the programme, found that the overall participation rates of youth over 16 increased by 4.5%. They also found that students receiving the full amount of the cash transfer also saw the

largest increase in participation rates, suggesting that lack of family resources was a major reason for their decision to leave school. However, as with Project GRAD described above, the EMA also involves more components than a simple monetary subsidy. A “Learning Agreement” is set up between the school, the young person and their parents. (Croxford et al., 2002, Dearden et al. 2009).

- Financial incentives may also be provided to staff, such as in Quantum Opportunities where staff bonuses are tied to youth participation. In France within the ZEP-project the financial incentive alone did not ensure a positive outcome but the success may rather be due to the composite nature of the measure involving mentoring, year round support service regardless of enrolment status and the provision of transportation for students (Hammond et al., 2007).

6.2 SOCIAL WELFARE FINANCING SCHEMES

Social welfare measures complement and support education of poor children and Roma children. It is not possible to generate an overall picture on those policies and particularly their impact because each country has its own approach based on its service delivery model and history. Below the key features of two systems- in Ireland and in Finland are presented to show the differences.

In Finland, each family regardless their income or socio-economic status receives *Child allowance*

for children resident in Finland until the age of 17 years. Child allowance is a fixed sum paid on a monthly basis as follows (2008): for the first child entitled to child allowance EUR 100; for the second child EUR 110.50; for the third child EUR 131; for the fourth child EUR 151.50; and for each subsequent child EUR 172. Single parents are paid a single-parent supplement of EUR 46.60 / month to the child allowance for each child. In addition to this, maintenance allowance that is paid by municipal authorities secures the maintenance of a child in situations when a child under 18 years resident in Finland does not obtain sufficient maintenance from both parents.

Social assistance does not constitute a part of Finnish social security but it is a form of last-resort financial support. It secures a person’s subsistence and promotes his or her independent coping. The municipal authorities pay social assistance in form of income support if the person concerned has no income or it does not cover the person’s necessary everyday expenses. Social assistance is granted based on the eligible expenses and the difference between the person’s income and assets. The purpose is to cover the basic consumption of those in need of this type of support.

Student financial aid for students above 17 years is administered by the Social Insurance Institution (Kela). Till age 17 the parents of the student receive child welfare benefit (which is calculated according to the number of children in the family as described above). Student financial aid comprises a *study grant, housing supplement and student loans* guaranteed by the State, together with student *meal subsidies, travel subsidies* for journeys to and from school, and loan interest assistance. It is paid for full-time studies after comprehensive school level, i.e. upper secondary school studies, vocational basic and supplementary education, and higher education degree studies. The amount of the Study Grant depends on the student’s own income and - in the case of younger students - their parents’ income. Decision is done at local level National Insurance Office. In Finland, financial aid for students is intended to provide an income to financially needy students whose parents are not under obligation to finance their studies and who are not eligible for aid under some other provisions.

The social welfare system in **Ireland** includes a Family Income Supplement (FIS) which is a weekly tax-free payment available to employees with under 18 years of age or between 18 and 22 years of age and in full-time education. To qualify for FIS, the average weekly family income must be below a certain amount for your family size. FIS is calculated on the basis of 60% of the difference between the income limit for the family size and the assessable income of the person(s) raising the child(ren). The combined income of a couple (married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting) is taken into account. Income from any source (excluding the disregards stated below) is assessed as means. The main items counted as income include earnings and extra income you or your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant have.

FIS income limits in 2013 are

If you have:	And your weekly family income is less than:
One child	€506
Two children	€602
Three children	€703
Four children	€824
Five children	€950
Six children	€1,066
Seven children	€1,202
Eight children	€1,298

FIS beneficiaries may also be entitled to the following support: The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to help meet the cost of uniforms and footwear for students attending school. To be eligible for the *Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance*, the applicant (parent or guardian) must be getting certain social welfare benefits or total household income must be below a certain amount. The *School Books Grant Scheme* is available for students in State primary and post-primary schools to help with the cost of school books. The scheme is mainly aimed at pupils from low-income families and families experiencing financial hardship. Funding for this scheme comes from the Department of Education and Skills and the scheme is administered in each school by the school principal.

7. SUPPORT TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Though children with disabilities automatically do not belong to a group of disadvantaged, it is also important to look at the policies targeted to this group of children because in the absence of appropriate support, these children may become disadvantaged.

Most countries have adopted inclusive education as a key strategy to promote equity in education. According to the principles of Inclusive Education, any child has the right to go to school nearest to their home regardless to their level or nature of special needs. Support to children and the school is provided by education authorities and social welfare. Education authorities are responsible for organizing education in mainstream classes, in integrated classes or in Special Schools. In those educational settings the children may get help from learning support and resource teachers and care support from special needs assistants (usually employed by social welfare). Students with specific learning disabilities may be able to get an exemption from some of the usual educational requirements. For example, in Ireland if you have dyslexia you may be exempt from the requirement to study Irish and/or a continental language.

Individual Education Plans (IEP) are a measure aiming at provision of individuals support to children in need. In Finland it is done in collaboration with the teachers, psychology and parents and the decisions are made at school or municipal level, in Ireland, its implementation is being coordinated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which has published Guidelines for the Individual Education Plan process. The NCSE is a statutory body with particular functions in relation to special needs education. Its main functions are:

- Planning and coordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs (in conjunction with schools and the Health Service Executive (HSE))
- Disseminating information on best practice concerning the education of children with special educational needs
- Providing information to parents in relation to the entitlements of children with special educational needs
- Assessing and reviewing resources required by children with special educational needs
- Ensuring that progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and reviewed
- Advising educational institutions on best practice
- Consulting with voluntary bodies
- Advising the Minister for Education and Skills on matters relating to special education

In Ireland the NCSE employs over 80 Special Educational Needs Organizers (SENOs) who are responsible for allocating additional teaching and other resources to support the special educational needs of children with disabilities at local level. SENOs are the point of contact for parents/guardians and schools. SENOs also provide advice and support for parents of children with special educational needs.

Financing of Special Needs Education

Financing of special needs education is one of the most significant factors determining inclusion. On the basis of data from 17 European countries, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs¹⁰ Education has made an analysis of the different funding systems and of the impact of financing on inclusion.

The analysis found different models of the financing of special needs education. In most countries different funding models are used simultaneously for different groups of special needs pupils. Also, the funding of integrated services (inclusion) is usually different from the funding of special schools. The study reveals that:

- In countries where the finance system is characterized by a direct input funding model for special schools (more pupils in special schools - more funds), the most criticism is raised. These strategies may result in less inclusion, more labeling and rising costs. A great deal of money is spent on non-educational matters such as litigation, diagnostic procedures and so on.
- In a decentralized special needs funding the central government allocates the funds to municipalities via a lump sum independent of the number of pupils with special needs (with possible corrections for socioeconomic differences) and where the municipality has the main responsibility for dividing the funds to lower levels countries report positive effects of their systems. These countries (e.g. Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark) mention almost no negative side effects of their systems and are generally very satisfied with their finance systems.
- Pupil bound budgeting seems to have some clear disadvantages. At times mainstream schools are eager to have pupils with special needs (and their budgets) within their brief. Also, criteria for learning disabilities are vague, ambiguous and change over time and this in itself may be a source of debate if budgets are linked to pupils. In practice, only clear-cut criteria are useful if funds are tied to pupils. If it is not possible to develop these, it seems that pupil bound budgets should not be used.

On the basis of this study, the following recommendations can be highlighted: A so-called throughput-model at the regional (municipality) level seems to be the most successful option, especially if some elements of output funding are incorporated. In such a model, budgets for special needs are delegated from central level to regional institutions (municipalities, districts, school clusters). At regional level, decisions are taken as to how the money is spent and which pupils should benefit from special services. It appears to be advisable that the institution, which decides upon the allocation of special needs budgets, firstly, can make use of independent expertise in the area of special needs and secondly has the tools to implement and maintain specialist strategies and services. (European Agency on Special Needs Education 1999).

It is apparent that inclusion can be more easily achieved within a decentralized funding model as compared to a centralized approach. A decentralized model is likely to be more cost-effective and provide fewer opportunities for undesirable forms of strategic behavior. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the central government concerned has to clearly specify which goals must be achieved. Thus, an important concern in a decentralized system is the issue of accountability. Accordingly, some kind of monitoring, inspection and evaluation procedures seem inevitable elements of funding systems. The need for monitoring and evaluation is even greater in a decentralized model compared with more centralized options. Independent evaluation of the quality of education for pupils with special needs is therefore part of such a model.

¹⁰ <http://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/financing-of-special-needs-education/Financing-EN.pdf>

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this review was to produce an overview of examples of effective support measures and policies targeted to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in education (the poor, Roma) in EU and beyond.

It was found that information about the impacts of specific measures at country level is hard to find but some impact information is available in cross-national reports (such as PISA) and meta-evaluations. Also, some project evaluations demonstrate impacts and effects about individual measures. Further, it was difficult to find reliable information about measures from all education levels. As a matter of fact, PISA seems to be the source of information which provides comparative analysis of education policies across countries. The PISA studies, however, focus only on age group 15 years. The PISA studies show that

- Grade repetition hinders equity in many OECD countries;
- Early student selection (to vocational and academic streams) is a common practice, eventually affecting the poor, because it widens achievement gaps and inequities;
- School choices, if not well designed, can increase segregation and inequities.

According to OECD, strategies which will support students to complete school include; making funding strategies responsive to students' and schools' needs, providing disadvantaged schools with additional resources, supporting schools and local administration in defining the way resources are spent, and balancing autonomy with resource accountability to ensure resources reach those with greatest needs. Also, providing access to early childhood education, particularly at risk children is essential because the learning outcomes of children with preschool education background are better across countries. Similarly, schools and local authorities should ensure that necessary measures and support is in place to identify the students with special educational needs and who are at risk of failing. At upper secondary school level, policy options include design of equivalent and diverse school pathways, ensuring availability and quality of guidance and counseling, and targeted measures to prevent dropout.

The analysis of evaluations of individual projects, in turn, showed that successful intervention were the ones targeting, or at least keeping in mind, the whole system and which applied a comprehensive combined approach such as direct support to beneficiaries complemented with mentoring and tutoring. Such comprehensive approach has proven to be the key factor of success. For instance, improving access to education for children coming from low socio-economic background alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully to the development of the individual and society. This is also noted by the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) which points out that *"the achievement of universal participation in education will be fundamentally dependent upon the quality of education available"*. Thus, more comprehensive, needs-based approaches would be desirable.

Providing additional resources to disadvantaged schools requires political sensitiveness. Students and schools may have different socio-economic profiles and varying needs, and funding schemes should reflect these. One example is the DEIS-programme implemented in Ireland.

Pre-primary education

The benefits of investing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and particularly pre-school education are observed in the performance of 15-year-olds in PISA. Students who have attended pre-primary education for more than one year outperformed the rest, and in many countries the difference is equivalent to more than one school year, even when taking into account the students' socio-economic background. However, there is considerable cross-country variation in the impact, which may be explained by factors such as quality. Some researchers suggest that centralized pre-primary education is the best options while others suggest that small groups or home-based care is important particularly for language development for children whose first language is other than official language.

Primary Education

The impacts of specific pro-poor strategies targeted to Primary Education level are hardly evaluated. The literature review shows that again, measures targeted to disadvantaged schools and students are the most prominent ones and much emphasis is put on school level interventions such as support systems, remedial teaching etc. Less information is found in how the schools are guided to allocate funds and resources available within the schools. For instance, effective use of the support personnel in schools could significantly contribute to the wellbeing and learning of students. Further, flexible grouping and multi-professional cooperation are for instance, one of the core issues tackled in principals' training in Finland. Also, in Ireland, the DEIS-programme targets directly to school level interventions.

Secondary Education

Systemic level measures are found at this level of education such as tracking or streaming of children, repetition policies and policies targeted to prevention of drop-out, but most policies relate to quality of teaching. For instance, postponing grade repetition would require teachers to teach in more challenging groups containing widely varying levels of student attainments. Many teachers are poorly prepared to this. Also many schools lack the resources to support these students and teachers or do not target the existing resources to this direction. Early support and comprehensive assessment can prevent the use of repetition. The OECD states (2012) that when learning gaps are observed, automatic promotion but with support, while limiting repetition, is more effective than extensively using grade repetition as a remedial strategy. Preventive strategies include improving teachers' skills to teach in classrooms with more diverse attainment levels, extending learning time by introducing remedial classes before and after school, using comprehensive and assessment, and ensuring the schools' are effectively used to support students in risk of failing.

An adequate funding system should reinforce education system to improve both quality and foster access for disadvantaged children. According to OECD (2012) among the different existing funding strategies for schools, formula funding using a needs-based group of variables is most conducive to equity. In this approach students are typically the unit of measures and money follows the student if she/he moves to another school. The additional funds are meant for providing further help to students such as additional teaching time, specialized material and in some cases, smaller classes. However, there is some evidence that student-tied funding formula can be used to attract funding. For instance in some countries (e.g. Czech Republic), the main reason to diagnose e.g. Roma children as "mentally retarded". Same criticism that financing explains best the international differences in the number of students in special education is present in several countries. For instance, in Finland local authorities receive extra money for each student removed into special education.

The findings of this review suggest that while systemic measures are needed at policy level to support equity, also interventions at school level are needed. Students from low socio-economic background need financial support but this alone is not sufficient to guarantee success in education.

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ANNEX 1

Policy impact analysis –providing additional support to students from vulnerable groups in pre-university education

General Framework: Pro-poor policies and measures for promoting enrolment, attendance and learning outcomes at pre-school, primary school and secondary school

Education Level	Policies targeted to Enrolment	Policies targeted to Attendance/ prevention of drop-out of poor and children at risk	Policies targeted to improving Learning outcomes
Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs and financial support (direct and indirect costs and pro-poor measures) - Registration, including coordination with primary health care (nearly 100 % of children attend in Finland, specific policies for Roma and "travellers" Ireland) - Special support measures (e.g. for children with disabilities) - Financial support/ vouches/ cash transfers/ school-based measures - Measures for rural communities - Early identification and intervention measures (before pre-school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs and financial support (direct and indirect costs and pro-poor measures) - Registration, including coordination with primary health care (nearly 100 % of children attend in Finland, specific policies for Roma and "travellers" Ireland) - Special support measures (e.g. for children with disabilities) - Financial support/ vouches/ cash transfers/ school-based measures - Measures for rural communities - Early identification and intervention measures (before pre-school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparatory classes intended for those pupils whose start at school has been postponed by one year. - Starting school one year later or one year earlier (measures to analyse school readiness...) - Individual Education Plans - Enrolment in Special Schools - Obtaining additional support - Out of school support - Strategies supporting cognitive development (e.g. Perry Preschool Programme US) - Measures supporting transition to primary school
Primary school	Enrolment	Attendance/ prevention of drop-out	Learning outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs and financial support (direct and indirect costs and pro-poor measures) - Measures supporting transition from pre-school - Measures for children who did not attend pre-school - Mediators (Roma) - Policies for Selection of schools / segregation - Rural communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring mechanisms (regulations); reporting; intervention - Parent engagement and education - Children with Special Educational Needs: Studying in regular class with (i) Remedial teaching (within school measure) and /or (ii) Part time special education (iii) Special schools - Student guidance and counselling - Support personnel: Personal Assistants/ school instructors (Human resource policy; who decides, funding) - School meals - Materials and textbooks - Curriculum (IEP) - Extracurricular activities - School resources - Individualised instruction/ IEP - Progression: exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extra-curricular activities (Tanoda) - Remedial teaching - Adapted assessments - Teacher policies: How to get teachers to disadvantaged areas/ schools? - Teacher education/ professional development - Support personnel - Mentoring (REF) - School-community-parent collaboration - Case management - Alternative schooling - IT

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transition from special school to mainstream school - Support to transition to secondary level - Assistive technology/ materials - Policies: Urban/ Rural 	
Education Level	Enrolment	Attendance/ prevention of drop-out	Learning outcomes
Средње образовање и васпитање		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring mechanisms (regulations); reporting; intervention - Policies preventing drop-out - Early identification and intervention of students at risk - Youth policies and education - Assistive technology/ materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second Change-type projects - Guidance and counselling - upper secondary education pathways to ensure completion - Transition; Additional Education (10th grade) - Vocational start courses introduce and prepare comprehensive school students for basic vocational training
Other (systemic policies) across education level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-professional / Cross-sectoral cooperation: what is the institutional and legal framework, case studies (Helsinki); including information exchange and Co-operation between pre-school and primary-education, multiprofessional teams - Language policies, e.g. teaching Roma language, bilingual education, interpretation services for deaf - Teacher policies: recruiting teachers to disadvantaged schools; Additional payments: incentives and allowances - Early Tracking of Students: Those European countries (e.g. DE, LI, LU, NL, AT) that track pupils at an early age display greater variation in pupil achievement than countries with more integrated school systems. Early tracking has especially negative effects on the achievement levels of disadvantaged children. This is partly because it tends to channel them towards less prestigious forms of education and training. EU reports indicate that postponing tracking until upper secondary level, combined with the possibility to transfer between school types, can reduce segregation and promote equity without diminishing efficiency. - Decentralization: Many Member States (e.g. BE-NL, CZ, IE, IT, LV, HU, PT, SK, UK) have sought to improve efficiency through decentralisation, by giving individual institutions more discretion in determining course content, allocating budgets or making personnel decisions. The rationale is usually that knowledge of local circumstances and specific needs make decentralised decision-making more efficient. (Here examples from Sweden, Finland) - Funding strategies responsive to students' and schools' needs; Financial incentives to schools with a disadvantaged population (IR, BE); allocation of funding to single schools (Belgium) or to clusters of schools (Ireland), and the focus on academic support (Belgium) or rather on extra-curricular activities (Ireland). - School choice policies to avoid segregation and increased inequities - Curriculum policies e.g. Intercultural education 		

ANNEX 2

Summary of Pro-Poor Policies and their analysis in Serbian Context

Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Conclusions
Systemic Measures for Accessibility and Affordability			
Financial Incentives and Vouchers	PE; SE	Voucher beneficiaries have higher educational attainment, when compared with non-voucher students (e.g. Programme for the Expansion of Secondary Education Coverage Colombia 1991).	Providing financial incentives for enrolment by offsetting household costs is a good strategy to increase access for the marginalized.
Early identification and intervention	ECCE, PPE, PE, SE	Early identification and intervention targeted at disadvantaged children can produce large positive socio-economic returns. Research emphasizes effective early identification at the earliest possible stage. Equally it is important that identification and intervention policies are in place at all phases of education cycle. Use of standardized tests in assessing "school readiness" is reducing (White 2012). Early intervention is a joint effort of authorities (Health, Social Welfare etc.).	Child health care is a common measure to identify children at risk. Information exchange and coordination between authorities is needed to ensure timely intervention.
Language	ECCE, PPE, PE, SE	In most European countries, all pupils, who speak a language other than the official language as their mother tongue or at home, are provided additional support to learn official language spoken in the particular country. Policies which support instruction in own native language and gradually decreasing use of mother tongue instruction seems to be an effective way to introduce an official language (e.g. Abazi 2006). Preparatory classes are available for instance immigrant children to obtain basic language skills.	Availability of educational materials in minority languages will pave the way for learning of official language. Good quality home-based programmes can support balanced language development. In order to promote presence Roma educators in the education system, scholarship programmes (e.g. within REF) could earmark scholarships targeted to Roma who would like to become teachers. Another strategy could be supporting Roma NGOs and minority NGOs in developing pedagogically appropriate material for ECCE and PPE.
Structuring the Education System			
Tracking and streaming of students	PE; SE	Early streaming has a negative impact on individual level to students assigned to lower tracks, particularly on the achievement levels of disadvantaged children. Tracking can also lead to large variations in performance among schools due to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the communities that are served. Removing early tracking may also indirectly affect the dropout. (Meghir and Palme 2005; OECD 2010, 2012)	OECD (2012) suggests removing early tracking or postponing tracking until upper secondary level, combined with the possibility to transfer between school types.

Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Conclusions
School Selection	PPE, PE, SE	There is limited research-based information about the impacts of school selection on learning outcomes of children coming from poor families. However, it is evident that there are fears and experiences that the well-off parents send their children to the “best” schools and on the other hand, poor or less educated parents may not have sufficient knowledge or money to make the choice even if they wanted to. In Serbia, full enrolment of all children in mainstream education is promoted and the new school enrolment policy abolishes the previous pre-enrollment categorization procedures due to which children with special needs but also many Roma were referred to special education. Instead. P.15	Measures are needed to ensure that school selection by parents is not used as segregation measure. Target support to “disadvantaged schools” so that parents do not want to withdraw their child from a school where for instance proportion of Roma children increased. Housing policies support desegregation. This would eliminate the possibility of generating Roma schools near the settlements.
Grade Repetition	PE; SE	Research in various countries suggests and experience shows that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds repeat a grade more often than their advantaged peers. (O’Brien P 2007 cited in OECD 2012) The evidence on the repeating a year is mixed, but it seems that this practice is ineffective in getting the failing students to perform better. At least, it is costly for the education system.	Individualized support and catch up opportunities can produce better results than repeating. Preventive strategies include improving teacher’s skills to teach in classrooms with diverse attainment levels, extending learning time by introducing remedial classes and strengthening meta-cognitive skills, and introducing financial incentives to reduce repetition and by making schools accountable for the number of students held back. Equally important is to establish early identification systems which will provide information not only about those under the grade level but also the low achievers, so that support reaches all falling behind in time. Text book publishers should produce remedial materials and adapted materials. Teachers need to be trained in identification and assessment of additional support needs as well as in planning and implementation of individualized teaching. Individual schools should develop school-based strategies to prevent repetition and include it the school development plan.
Providing attractive alternatives in upper secondary school	SE	There are projects (e.g. in Norway) where low motivated VET students are offered an alternative shorter and less comprehensive upper secondary programme, rather than the full VET upper secondary, showing positive results. Austria and Germany have diversified offers and obtain graduation rates close to 90%, with VET students making up the majority of the upper secondary graduates.	Providing good quality and practice-oriented alternatives in upper secondary education is one of the effective measures which could influence in inequality in education.

Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Conclusions
Preventing Drop-out and offering second changes	PE;; SE	Dropout prevention is more than tracking attendance. The national Dropout Prevention Center in the US has rated more than 100 programmes having strong evidence of their efficiency in reducing dropout. In order to overcome early school leaving, policies must involve action both outside and inside school simultaneously. School-based tracking systems which follow several criteria of attendance, GPA, engagement and discipline three times year seem to be effective.	The most successful measures combine components within school, outside school at a systemic macro level. Picking up on a certain number of signals that form an early warning system may require a close cooperation between educational authorities and many other parts of government such as social and labor services, health services and justice system in some countries. Preventing drop-out requires school-level cooperation. See recommendations related to repetition above.
Targeting support to disadvantaged schools			
Financial Incentives to Disadvantaged schools	PPE;PE;SE	Targeting support to disadvantaged schools can contribute to the increased enrollment of disadvantaged students in these schools and improved learning outcomes. It can make a difference provided the level of additional financing is sufficient and they are accompanied by incentives such as teacher education, additional support to students falling behind. However, providing financial incentives to teachers should be supported with other measures related to learning environments and resources. In Ireland, the DEIS (Delivering Equality of opportunity developed a standardized system for identifying levels of disadvantage in schools and provides a range of support. The last report on Retention in post primary schools shows that the average Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased from 68.2% to 73.2% for students who entered post primary level from 2001 to 2004.	The DEIS criteria for disadvantaged schools could be further studied to develop criteria to target additional/ specialized support to those schools in need. Also clustering of schools as "learning communities" could be an option to bring the disadvantaged schools at higher level. This clustering could for instance allow teacher exchange between the schools. Financial incentives should be accompanied with quality inputs.
Developing Positive School Climate	PPE;PE;SE	A positive climate can have a powerful and significant impact on student achievement and well-being in disadvantaged schools. There are different options to support positive environments (OECD 2012, 123).	School leadership, school climate and environment, high quality teachers and classroom learning strategies and cooperation with communities and parents are effective measures to improve school climate.
Class size	PPE;PE;SE	A review of European education systems show that in most countries, improvements on the cognitive skills acquired by students seem to be linked to the instructional practices implemented in smaller classrooms rather than the classroom size itself (OECD 2012). The school-based measures on how the students can be grouped differently within schools itself have not been explored sufficiently. In Serbia the class size is 30, and it can be reduced so that one child from vulnerable groups counts as 2 or 3 children, depending on the complexity of its special needs. Only two children from these categories are to be enrolled in one class, hence in these cases the class may have 26 or 28 children.	The system of reducing class size based on number of children with IEP is an effective measure, if supported by appropriate instructional methodologies and school-based arrangements.

Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Conclusions
Support to Disadvantaged Students			
Transportation costs School Transport	PPE;PE;SE	Provision of school transport is essential for attendance particularly for students living in remote areas. Regulations for transport provision differ by country and are usually related to the distance rather than socio-economic status of the family. It is common that the school transport is financed by the education authorities at the pre- and primary school level and during the lower secondary school but the regulations change as the student moves to upper secondary level or is of age 18 years and transport is subsidized by Social Welfare.	Policies to support access to school needs to be in place and they need to be monitored.
Student welfare		Student welfare covers several measures such as school meals, counseling, remedial teaching and tutoring and mentoring. There is limited information about the impacts of specific measures	
School Feeding	PPE;PE;SE	School feeding programmes provide both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism, and improving food security at the household level, particularly when used to benefit specifically the poorest and most vulnerable children. The school meal policies differ by country. Whereas free school meal is provided in Finland to all students for instance, in the UK , for a child to qualify for a Free School Meal, their parent or carer must be receiving particular benefits as stated by Government. In Ireland , the School Food Programme is to assist children who are "unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them" and no consistent eligibility criteria exist.	The effectiveness of school feeding programmes is dependent upon several factors, including the selection of; the effectiveness of targeting; and the associated costs. There is a particular need for better data on the cost-effectiveness of the available approaches and modalities. (Bundy 2012).
Remedial teaching	PE, SE	Remedial teaching is organized in various ways: In some countries, schools receive a lump sum of hours (based on number of students) and the schools can allocate and distribute the hours rather independently. It is common, for instance in Finland that a teacher has a certain amount of hours (0,5 – 1 hours per week or a lump sum) allocation for remedial teaching which is paid according to the time-reports of teachers. In their weekly workload teachers in Serbia are obliged to have 20 regular instruction hours, and 4 hours devoted to remedial instruction, individual instruction, organizing additional top-up activities for talented children, and preparatory teaching for forthcoming exams (LFES, art136, st 1, point 1.).	Remedial teaching is one of the measures valued by the disadvantaged families (who may not be able to support the child for instance in homework). However, the quality of this teaching differs because teachers have limited experience and expertise in individuals teaching and guidebooks and materials do not exist. There are opportunities to organize "learning clubs" where teachers dedicate their time to teaching certain topics.

Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Conclusions
After school Support		The results on After-school- support programmes have been mixed. There are reports that show significant improvement in learning outcome's and social skills and other studies did not find significant impacts. There are several studied in the US showing that quality of after-school supports is of concern. Improving the quality of instruction can make a significant impact on learning outcomes.	Serbia to map out existing After-school-support programmes and their strengths and development needs. Criteria should be developed and quality of such programmes monitored.
Tutoring and Mentoring	PE; SE	Tutoring and mentoring is not commonly supported by government policies. However, some NGO initiative has shown positive impact. The project where teacher faculty students were engaged as tutors (Hungary) was a successful example with multiple benefits.	The small grants could be mechanisms to develop mentoring and tutoring for the needy ones.
Supporting Transition	PE/SE SE/USE/V ET	Smoothing the transition into secondary can prevent students from falling behind and potentially dropping out (OECD, 2011c). A high-stake exam is used for selection. In Serbia, schools are obliged to organize preparatory classes during the last term prior to the examination. For Roma students this bottleneck is partially reduced, due to an affirmative action policy for enrolment into secondary and tertiary education.	Supporting transition could include many of the measures discussed in this paper. The quality of the existing measures should be studied and further developed and measures to be developed to ensure that this support reaches the needy ones.
Counseling	SE (PE)	<p>Pupil/student counselling supports and guides pupils and students to perform as well as possible in their studies. They also provide guidance and support for reflections, plans and choices concerning further studies and careers. At the upper stage, pupil counselling includes personal counselling, tutorials, class lessons and periods of workplace guidance. Students at upper secondary schools receive student counselling from student counsellors, group counsellors, teachers of different subjects and principals. Student counselling helps students in learning and study techniques, planning their own study plan, monitoring the progress of studies, use of social benefits and issues relating to the matriculation examination. (City of Helsinki 2012)</p> <p>Career guidance is a new policy increasingly introduced in Serbia during basic education in the last couple of years, replacing the previous tradition of organizing professional orientation for 7th and 8th grade students in schools. Legally, professional orientation and career guidance is one of the many responsibilities of school psychologists and pedagogues (Rulebook on the programme of all areas of work of school/pre-school councilors, 2012).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore how Career Counseling can be introduced in the new curricula; - Educating school psychologists in employment-oriented career counseling to ensure that they have a broad vision and understanding about the employment market. - Vocational orientation could be arranged as an extra curricula activity for students who need to expose their experience in employment and labor market. - Work on alternative pathways for employment particularly for students with disabilities. Start well in advance on promoting employment of persons with disabilities (see e.g. EU Social Funds Projects)

Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Conclusions
Teacher Assistants and Mediators		<p>A clear distinction appears between countries where support is delivered by a specialist school staff member, and those countries where support is delivered by a specialist professional external to the school. It is argued that classroom assistants need to be sufficiently qualified if they are to improve the education of children with special. With regards to Roma mediators, to date there have been mixed results in the use of mediators. In Denmark, Roma mediators have a high turnover. Also in Finland, few mediators are employed in a small amount of municipalities. Their position in the civil service structure is not defined.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pedagogical Assistants/ School Assistants can provide a valuable support to the children with special educational needs and to the entire class. However, this requires training both for the assistant and for the teachers and principals to make best use of this resource.
Scholarships		<p>There are different scholarship schemes across EU countries. Many of them are targeted to higher education. In Serbia, the Law on Pupils' and Students' Standard regulates access to stipends, loans and dormitories for secondary and tertiary education students. There is limited information about the impacts of the scholarships but for instance the REF evaluation (2012) found that financial support combined with mentoring and tutorship it has contributed most to increased numbers of Roma in tertiary education. A conclusion can be drawn from PISA results that students from low socio-economic backgrounds (who are more common low achievers than their advantaged peers) have fewer opportunities to merit-based stipends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures are needed to ensure that scholarships reach students in rural and very disadvantaged areas also at secondary and high school level. Criteria for selection, the selection process as well as close follow-up strengthen the impacts of this measure.